

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 SS-20 NSC-10 CPR-02

SY-10 USSS-00 TRSE-00 PRS-01 RSC-01 PA-04 USIE-00

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: OVIP

SUBJECT: PRIVATE VISIT OF JOSEPHINE BONGO, WIFE OF
PRESIDENT OF GABON

1. JOSEPHINE BONGO ARRIVED UNANNOUNCED IN US NOV 8 FOR
PRIVATE VISIT OF UNDETERMINED LENGTH WITH UNKNOWN ITINERARY.
SINCE THEN HER VISIT HAS BEEN MARRED BY UNPLEASANT CUSTOMS
AND SECURITY DIFFICULTIES AT AIRPORTS IN MINNEAPOLIS,
LOS ANGELES AND NEW YORK. COMPLICATING FACTOR IS PRESENCE
OF ARMED GUARDS WHO ARE PART OF HER ENTOURAGE OF NINE.

2. UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT OCCURRED UPON HER ARRIVAL FROM
LOS ANGELES AT JFK AIRPORT EVENING NOV 11 WHEN THREE
REVOLVERS OF BODYGUARDS BEING HELD BY PILOT WERE TURNED
OVER TO PORT AUTHORITY OFFICIALS ALONG WITH LUGGAGE OF
MRS. BONGO. LUGGAGE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY RETURNED TO HER,
BUT AIRPORT POLICE KEPT THE REVOLVERS TO BE RETURNED AT
TIME OF DEPARTURE FROM US IN ACCORDANCE WITH N.Y. HAND
GUN LAW.

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3. MISUNDERSTANDING NEVER CLARIFIED AROSE AS TO REASON
REVOLVERS WERE NOT PROMPTLY RETURNED TO GUARDS. MRS BONGO
WHO IS OBVIOUSLY UPSET OVER THIS SERIES OF EVENTS DEPARTED
WITH HER ENTOURAGE TONIGHT FOR PARIS ONE DAY AHEAD OF
SCHEDULE BEFORE UN MISSION ABLE TO MAKE FULL EXPLANATION.

4. MRS BONGO WILL UNDOUBTEDLY REPORT HER DIFFICULTIES
TO PRESIDENT BONGO WHO IS IN PARIS AND EMBASSY MAY BE
ASKED FOR AN EXPLANATION.

5. IN PAST YEARS DURING HER ANNUAL PRIVATE VISITS
DEPT HAS HAD SUFFICIENT NOTICE OF MRS BONGO'S ARRIVAL
AND KNOWLEDGE OF HER ITINERARY IN ORDER TO ALERT LOCAL
CUSTOMS AND POLICE OFFICIALS. DEPT HAS ALSO PROVIDED
MRS BONGO WITH AN ESCORT-INTERPRETER TO ASSIST HER
DURING HER VISIT.

RUSH

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